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ABSTRACT

This paper begins with a review of the literature that addresses the broad concerns of youth and media, with particular focus on children and adolescents, then moves on to explain the purpose of this specific study, i.e., to determine the nature of Nigerian young people's access to/use of television and to the competing media of radio and newspapers, their television station preferences, and choice of specific programs. Subjects were between 15 and 25 years old and representative of the first generation of Nigerian television children. A 37-item questionnaire was administered to 300 randomly selected youths living in three major urban centers. Analyses of the 227 usable responses received indicated that: (1) most youths had ready access to radio, television, and newspapers; (2) television was chosen as the prime medium, with newspaper second and radio third; (3) television viewing was a daily routine; (4) many preferred one station to others available; (5) television provided gratification (entertainment); (6) news was preferred to other types of programs; (7) news, politics, and sports were considered entertainment; and (8) commercials were liked. It is concluded that the results suggest the need for definite policies in the operations of Nigerian television. (36 references) (CGD)

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TELEVISION IN THE LIVES OF NIGERIAN YOUTHS

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Paper Presented to the 1986 International Television Studies Conference.

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Television is no doubt, one of the most modern mass media, though historically the invention dates back to 1839, the year that the French physicist Alexandre Edmond Becquerel observed the electrochemical effects of light. The next stage was the contribution of the German scientist, Paul G. Nipkow who in 1884 devised a medianical method by which a spiraling disc could pass over a picture and create a scanning effect.[1] This was an adaptation of the principle employed in the old penny arcade where turning down a series of slightly different pictures created the illusion of movement.

This early and crude mechanical television continued to improve as it was obvious that the potentials of television could not be fully realized if developments just stopped at the mechanical reproduction of visual images. The end of the mechanical era came in 1923 when the inconoscope television pickup tube was patented, following the achievements of Russian immigrant, Vladimir K. Zworykin and an American, Philo Farnsworth. At this time, it became possible to detect and transmit pictures instantly by using electrons.[2]

The era of modern television as we know it today came in 1936 when long distant transmission of television images up to one mile became possible, and the following year (1937) the two American giants, NBC and RCA brought television to the public domain. The first American television network broadcasting was inaugurated on the first day of February in 1940.

In Britain, television came at the instance of the public-owned British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) in 1936. Private participation was not introduced until 1955 when commercial operations were inaugurated. Even though BBC television began in 1936, pre-war television was an experimental and London - only service that was highly subsidized by radio revenue.[3]

Early Television Programming

The early years of television programming were characterized by experimentations and innovations. The medium itself was innovative, there being nothing in the history of human civilization up to this time to match the wonders of instant sights, sound and motion in news coverage. The early years were also a time of copious experimentation, arising from the novelty of the medium and the serendipitous nature of the earliest programme selections. Some of the early American programmes were situational comedies for adults. However, a great many programmes were designed for the youthful watchers. These included the puppet show of "Kukla, Fran, and Ollie", "Juvenile Jury", for serious children, and "Mr Wizard" for the science-inclined. Other programmes include "Howdy Doody", "Wonderful World of Disney" and "Mickey Mouse Club". Early television was more entertaining than didactic.

Television's light-heartedness ended with the late 1950s,

as the decade of the 1960s showed the medium to be what mass politics had been waiting for. If it was impossible to educate the public about the major political issues and the attributes of each political candidate, television changed all these, as it brought the political campaigns right into the voters' sitting rooms and showed the candidates in vivid dramatic life. A "new politics" was inevitable, and when it came, people's lives were affected as never before. Television is ideally suited to creating candidates' "images" that could even be considered independent of party, and many voters report receiving most of their political information from the medium.[4]

The early comic and light-hearted entertainment programmes and the political content of television have now merged to result in a mix that reflects the quintessential functions of the medium for entertainment and education. A great deal of today's programmes usually serve entertainment and/or educative purposes.

EARLY NIGERIAN TELEVISION

The Nigerian mass media have a historical link with the British system. In the print area, the first newspaper Iwe Irohin was established in 1859 by a British missionary, Henry Townsend. In the case of radio broadcasting which came in three stages, the BBC was the precursor and progenitor. Early radio broadcasting started with rediffusion or redistribution

of radio signals received from the BBC. This wired broadcasting service was commissioned on December 1, 1935 in Lagos and was the forerunner of the Nigerian Broadcasting Service which was inaugurated in April 1, 1951. Six years later, the Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation, the first public service broadcasting corporation of its kind in any colony, became operational on April 1, 1957. The guidelines for its incorporation stated that it "should be modelled on the British Broadcasting Corporation with a national and regional organization..."[5]

Like newspapers and radio broadcasting, early Nigerian television had a characteristic British imprint. A regional government, the Western Nigerian Government pre-empted the Federal Government in the establishment of a television station. The Western Nigeria Television Service was inaugurated on October 31, 1959, and thus became not only the first television station in the nation, but also tropical Africa's first telecasting facility.[6] At the earliest stage, it was a joint partnership between the Western Nigeria Government and the British-owned overseas Rediffusion Limited, until December 3 1961, when the latter pulled out and the government bought out their shares. Federal-controlled television came at the instance of the Nigerian Television Service (NTS) which was launched on April 1, 1962. Federal Television was introduced under the aegis of

the American giant, RCA, which outbidded Siemens and Marconi in the tenders for the establishment of national television services. The contract with RCA was signed on February 23, 1961, though actual telecasting started in April 1962 on channel 10, Lagos. The earliest programmes lasted one-and-a-quarter hours and consisted of 45 minutes of live shows and news, and 30 minutes of foreign films.[7] There was a variety of programmes on light entertainment, women and children, news, current affairs, sports, culture and religion.

RCA supplied and installed telecasting equipment up to 1967 when its engineers left Nigeria at the expiration of the management contract. Colour telecasting was introduced in September 1975, after two years of planning and acquiring the necessary equipment. On April 1, 1976, the Federal Government took over all television stations in the country and on April 1, 1977, a new body known as Nigerian Television Authority came into existence as the sole managers of national television. Today, the authority has broadcasting stations in all the 19 state capitals, including the Federal Capital Territory, and has the capacity for network telecasting. More than two-thirds of the 19 states operate local television stations, which are autonomous of federal control. Unlike the practice in the United States and Britain, private ownership of television stations is not allowed in Nigeria.

Present State

Television has been called everything from a pedagogical magic wand capable of wiping out illiteracy and underdevelopment to a time bomb that can wreck the family structure. Advocates of instructional television point to the medium's potential in reaching large numbers of the public and possibly influencing their life styles in definite ways. Cynics note that in spite of the large sizes of television audiences and the long hours they spend with the medium, there is little evidence of real learning. For instance, Robinson reported that heavy television news viewers were less able to identify personalities in the news than less regular viewers, a finding that seems to contradict the arguments of those who see a corollary between television use and learning.[8]

Regardless of our success or failure in documenting the effects of television, one thing is certain: the medium has become one of the most powerful communication channels in the history of human civilization. Much of its impact cannot be measured by statistics, though it is obvious to even a casual observer that both our working lives and leisure pre-occupations have been affected in sublime and subtle ways of television. The public has widely accepted television, even since its introduction as a mass medium. In any part of the world where its use is not widespread, it is usually as a result of poverty

and/or government control rather than a distaste for the medium. Not surprisingly, its penetration in the developed world is fast approaching saturation. In the United States for instance, an average of seven hours is spent watching television every day.[9]

General Use of Television

Wherever television is used, it has affected the lives of the people in definite ways. Schramm, Lyle and Parker note that "no mass medium has ever exploded over a continent as television exploded over North America in the 1950s."[10] The explosive nature of television use is not restricted to North America of the 1950's as the same phenomenon is experienced in a similar vein in all parts of the world where television is introduced. The availability of television requires viewers to reschedule their time in order to accommodate television watching.

With children, the rescheduling is done selectively, as some media activities are reduced while others remain unchanged. In a study of two communities (one with television and the other without) it was found that "television (has) greatly rearranged the child's leisure time, particularly that portion of his leisure time spent receiving communication from the mass media".[11] More specifically, it was found that the child in an era of television spear less time reading canic books than did his counterpart in an earlier era. In the television town,

"children made time for television chiefly by taking it from radio, movies, and comic books."[12] Incidentally, the other media-newspapers, books, and magazines were not so affected. In fact, newspaper reading was actually a bit higher, though the difference could be attributed to the fact that metropolitan dailies were more available in the television town.

Television and Violence

For a number of years, researchers in the area of youth and media have focused on children's use of television, especially by profiling the amount of violence on network television.[13] This research interest is founded on the fear that heavy viewing, and presumably the viewing of a great deal of television violence can engender a distorted and "violent" view of the world, and more importantly make children more prone to violence.[14]

The results of many research studies in the area indicate significant relationships between the amount of television viewing and selected indices of fear, mistrust and perceived probability of experiencing violence.[15] The common finding is that the more one watches television, the more one over-estimates the prevalence of violence in the world and suspects that he will be a victim of a violent attack.

The simple linear relationship suggested by these results is in need of modification, as a result of other studies (e.g.

Hicks, Brown and Linne)[16] that indicate the operation of mediating factors. Some of these factors are contextual (i.e. family and social setting) and others are personal. Roberts reported that the family factors affect not only the children's reaction to violence, but they also, determine the amount of time the children spend watching television. The personal factors significantly affect the children's perception of violence.[17]

Some researchers in youth and television have focused attention on children's use of television news. Some of the studies found that many children watched national television newscasts and local news "often".[18] Other studies documented some of the (non-violence-related) consequences of television use. In the area of political learning, it has been reported that copious use resulted in political awareness but not necessarily overt behaviour such as political activity.[19] Television news exposure has also been reported to increase adolescents' ability to differentiate between the policies of political parties and increase their awareness of government law-making processes as well as knowledge of government's role in society.[20] Similar studies focusing on perceived importance of the media, report that adolescents themselves choose television as the dominant source of political information.[21]

Another perspective examines the motivations for young people's use of television. Results in this area indicate that there are three dominant motivations: personal utility function

for enjoyment and helpful guidance, negative function presenting primarily bad news, and finally, a civics books function that relates to political communication.[22]

The above materials address the broad concerns of youth and media. Specifically, many of them focus on children and adolescents and thus their findings can be extrapdated to other age segments with extreme caution. The immediate concern of this study is to determine the nature of young people's access to and use of television. In order to broaden the perspective, access to the competing media of radio and newspapers will be addressed too. In addition, answers will be sought to questions on television station preference and young people's choice of specific programmes.

The key questions undergirding this study are:

1. How much access do young people have to television, radio and newspapers?
2. In terms of personal preference, which medium is their first choice?
3. What are the major reasons for the preference pattern?
4. How often do they watch television?
5. Do they prefer one station to another?
6. If so, why?
7. What are their programme preferences?
8. What is their reaction to television advertisements?

METHOD

Much of the research on youth and the media has dealt with mostly children, with a sizeable proportion addressing adolescents. This study is a little different because the subjects were young people of between 15 and 25 years of age. This age group was chosen because it represents the first generation of television children, i.e. children who grew up with television. The lower age limit was chosen to ensure that respondents would be able to articulate their responses to the questions.

A 37-item questionnaire was designed and administered to 300 randomly selected youths living in three major urban centres: Benin, Enugu and Lagos. The first two cities are services by two television stations each while the third has eight. Residents in each city can listen to at least six different radio stations and read some of the 13 major national newspapers. The cities were chosen because of their geographical spread and the bundance of the modern media in them.

One hundred questionnaires were distributed in each city, in such a way as to assure representation from the upper, middle and lower class residential districts. The instrument elicited biographic information about the respondents as well as psychographic data about their preferences and attitudes. Data collection was completed in the spring of 1984.

In addition to the quantitative data provided by the

respondents, a qualitative analysis of the programmes telecast by the television stations in the three cities was undertaken to add perspective to the findings. Because no hypotheses were proposed, no statistical tests were undertaken.

FINDINGS

1. Qualitative Results

Out of the 300 questionnaires distributed, 227 were returned usable, yielding a 75.7% response rate. Benin City accounted for 89 respondents or 39.2% of the usable responses; Enugu accounted for 77 (33.9%) and the remaining 61 respondents (26.9%) came from Lagos.

The sample was over-represented by male respondents, who were 137 in all, accounting for 60.4%. There were 87 female respondents that accounted for 38.3% of the sample. Three respoundents (1.3%) failed to indicate their gender. Many of the respondents were between 22 and 25 years old. There were 94 people (41.4%) in this cohort. Seventy-four people (32.6%) said they were 15-18 years old, and the remaining 59 (26.0%) were 19-21 years old.

As expected, a large number of the youths were single; 200 of them (88.1%) said they were yet to marry, while only 26 (11.5%) were married. One respondent (0.4%) was divorced. About half the respondents, 114 (50.2%) said they were students and 92 (40.5%) were working while 18 (7.9%) were unemployed.

Three respondents (1.3%) failed to indicate their occupational status.

The respondents had varying educational backgrounds representing the wide range of educational experiences and qualifications that characterize youths all over the world. Five people (2.2%) had less than full primary school education, 24 (10.6%) had only some high school education and 130 (57.3%) had ordinary and/or advance level certificates. There were 38 people (16.7%) with national diploma or undergraduate degrees and 30 (13.2%) gave no response or chose "other", a catch-all for non-formal educational qualifications. Considering the respondents' ages, it is not surprising that a little more than half had ordinary and/or advance level certificates. The low number of people with less than primary school education is reminiscent of urban youths' ambition for formal education. (See Table 1).

On the question of access to the three common media of communication, starting with radio, 199 respondents (87.6%) asserted that they had ready access and 14 people (6.2%) said they did not have any radio sets at their disposal. Another 14 people (6.2%) had only occasional access to the radio. The pattern of responses is similar for both the boys and the girls. For the boys, 122 (89.1%) had ready access, while seven (5.1%) did not and eight (5.8%) had only occasional access. The

girls' responses showed that 75 (86.2%) had ready access while six (6.9%) had only occasional access. In terms of strict proportions, the boys had more ready access to radio, though the difference is minute.

With television, 195 respondents (85.9%) said they had ready access to the medium; 14 (6.2%) said they did not while 18 (7.9%) had only occasional access. The figures for the boys are 117 (85.4%) for ready access, nine (6.6%) for no access and 11 (8.0%) for only occasional access. For the girls, the figures were 76 (87.4%) for ready access, four (4.6%) for no access and seven (8.0%) for only occasional access. Strictly speaking the girls seemed more inclined than the boys to ready access, though this inclination is too minute to make any difference.

With newspapers, 197 respondents (86.8%) said they had ready access, 12 (5.3%) had no access and 18 (7.9%) had only occasional access. The figures for the boys were 120 (87.6%) for regular access, six (4.4%) for no access and 11 (8.0%) for only occasional access. This compares closely with the girls' figures which were 75 (86.2%) for regular access, five (5.8%) for no access and seven (8.0%) for only occasional access. In terms of strict percentages, boys seemed to take more easily to newspapers than girls (See Table 2).

Next, the respondents were asked to rank the three media

in their order of preference. Television was chosen as the prime medium by 103 youths (45.4%). Radio and newspapers nearly tied, with 47 people (20.7%) choosing newspapers as their prime and 46 (20.3%) preferring radio. A surprisingly high number of respondents, 31 (13.6%) could not or refused to make a choice.

As with the responses on access, the girls seemed to be less interested in radio than the boys, who were less interested in television than the girls. Thirty-eight boys (27.7%) and seven girls (8.0%) chose radio as their first choice; 54 boys (39.4%) and 48 girls (55.2%) chose television as their first choice while 30 boys (21.9%) and 17 girls (19.5%) chose newspapers (See Table 3).

When asked to rationalize their media preferences 100 people (44.1%) attributed their choices to availability and easy access, while 60 people (26.4%) prefaced theirs on convenience. This meant that they found it convenient to use their prime medium when they needed or wanted to. The youths appeared to be attracted by extra-media factors (e.g. time, schedules and availability) rather than the peculiar contents of the particular media. (See Table 4)

Television Questions

Unlike the practice in many parts of the developed world, where many television stations telecast around the clock

television broadcasts in Nigeria usually start late in the afternoon and end by mid-night. During the weekends, the stations operate extended hours, but apart from Lagos, no other city has morning telecasts. These limited hours of viewing notwithstanding, many reschedule their activities to make time for television. Not surprisingly, nearly two-thirds of the sample, 145 people (63.9%) said they watch television daily while 53 (23.3%) watch only occasionally. There are only five people (2.2%) who never watch at all. Between the boys and the girls, 86 boys (62.8%) and 58 girls (66.7%) watched daily while 34 boys (24.8%) and 18 girls (20.7%) watched only occasionally. (See Table 5)

Because each of the cities sampled is serviced by more than one television station, respondents were asked if they preferred one station to another, and if so why. Two-thirds of the sample, 150 people (66.1%) had a definite station preference while 71 people (31.3%) said any station could do. Six youths (2.6%) kept mute on this issue. The youths had definite uses of and derived particular gratifications from the popular television programmes of these favourite stations. They articulated these under five broad categories.

By far the most dominant factor determining their preference was entertainment. There were 103 youths (45.4%) who gave entertainment as their primary reason. About a third of

the sample, 81 youths (35.7%) based their preference on the station's coverage of national affairs. The other lesser factors were: coverage of state affairs, advertisements and broadcasting in native dialects.

Between the boys and girls, while entertainment seemed more important to the latter, coverage of national and state affairs seemed to matter more to the former. Fifty-eight boys (42.3%) and 42 girls (48.3%) based station preferences on entertainment. On the other hand, 66 boys (48.2%) and 38 girls (41.3%) chose one station over another based on their coverage of national and state affairs. (See Table 6)

Just as television audiences prefer one station to another, they also prefer certain television programmes to others. Respondents were asked to rate television programmes in order of preference. Their answers showed that television news was their most preferred programme. There was no competition at all from other programme types. Movies took a very distant second place. There were 130 youths (57.3%) who preferred television news over all other programmes. The second most popular television content, movies, garnered only 29 first-place votes. The other less important content matter were drama, sports, political programmes and discussions. The boys seemed to like television news, political content, and sports more than the girls who seemed to be better fans for television drama, movies,

discussion/debates and light entertainment/music. (See Table 7) The popularity of television news programmes justifies the high advertising rates charged for the news adjacency slots of commercial television stations. Television commercials that are aired during news programmes attract even higher rates. Some critics think such interruptions can pique viewers so much there could be a backlash. The results belie this fear of audience's exasperation with commercial interruptions.

The respondents were asked when they like to see television commercials. Contrary to the common opinion that many viewers detest television commercials, only 13 respondents (5.7%) said they never want commercials. Eighty-five people (37.4%) want them only during their least-preferred programmes, and 91 people (40.1%) prefer them during interludes, while 24 advertising fans (10.6%) never mind those commercial interruptions, and in fact welcome them in their favourite programmes.

Proportionately more girls than boys like commercial interruptions of both favoured and unfavoured programmes. The boys will rather have commercials during interludes. Twelve girls (13.8%) and 11 boys (8.0%) want commercials during favoured programmes. The respective figures for unfavoured programmes are 42 (48.3%) for girls and 43 (31.4%) for boys. Sixty-two boys (45.3%) and 28 girls (32.2%) want commercials during interludes. Of the 13 respondents who said they don't

ever want any commercials, 12 (8.8%) were boys, while the remaining one person failed to indicate his/her gender. (See Table 8).

Qualitative Analysis of Television Programmes

In order to provide additional perspectives on the data, the common content of some television stations were analysed to show the kinds of "tube intelligence" the youths were exposed to. Nigerian television stations differ among themselves. The greatest differences, however, are between state government owned stations and their federal government owned counterparts. The former emphasize local materials while the latter as key instruments for engendering national unity and inter-regional integration emphasize national content. Regardless of whether a station is state or federal government owned, it typically starts broadcasting about 4.00 p.m. Close down is about 12.15 a.m. On Saturdays and Sundays, telecasting starts as early as 9.00 a.m. and a few Lagos stations stay on to about 3.00 a.m. for the Special Weekend Television, that features mostly re-runs of old American films.

A great deal (sometimes as high as 65%) of television content is foreign. For instance, Lagos television viewers are presented with these foreign programmes on a weekly routine basis. On Mondays, they have Famous Five, Good Time, Fire House, Starsky and Hutch and New Schmoo. On Tuesdays, they have

Scooby Doo, Super Globe Trotters, only when I Laugh, Wide Wide World of Animals and Minder. The menu for weekend television includes Magic Star Traveller, Dr in the House, Dan August, the Love Boat, Sesame Street, People's Court and Big League Soccer. Other regular foreign films and drama include The Professionals, Agatha Christie, Hawai 50, the Jeffersons, Sanford and Sons and Mind Your Language.

A great deal of the local content is just "talking heads" in the form of press interviews, criticisms, lectures or general discussion. There is however an increasing interest in providing local drama. On weekdays, the 8.00 to 9.00 p.m. slot is exclusively reserved for these local drama presentations, the most popular of which are the New Masquerade, Bas; and Company, Second Chance, The New Village Headmaster and New Samanja. The "new" prefix suggests that many of these programmes are rejuvenations of long-running serials. All of them employ the vein of humour to moralise while entertaining. For instance, in a typical episode of the New Masquerade, the chief character, Chief Zebrudaya would entertain the audience with jokes, puns on words, humorous anecdotes, and then conclude with a pedantic sermon on some serious social issue such as corruption, police brutality, falling standards of education or tax evasion. Second Chance is an adaptation of the popular British serial, Mind Your Language. The objective is to teach

proper use of English idiomatic expression through humorous presentations.

Many of the early evening presentations are made with the youths in mind. The day's presentations usually start with such children's programmes as The Under Fives, Younger Brains, Children's Corner, French For Beginners and Children's Drama. Other similar programmes are Kiddies Junction, Arts and Crafts, Young Farmers' Club, Teaching Sports and Junior Drama. These programmes are scheduled between 4.00 and 7.00 p.m. on weekday evenings. In addition to these programmes, there is about a half-hour of educational television designed for secondary school students. This covers such secondary school subjects as physics, chemistry, mathematics, biology and modern languages.

The television stations provide about two hours of news every day. The local news is usually broadcast at 7.00 p.m., with a vernacular translation following immediately after, at 7.30 p.m. The major network news comes on at 9.00 and ends at 9.45 p.m. The last news cast (appropriately called NEWSCAP) takes the air at 11.00 p.m. and lasts for about 15 minutes. Just like Nigerian newspapers that contain a large number of obituary and in memoriam advertisements, Nigerian television stations broadcast a lot of announcements about deaths, wakes, burials and in memoriam.[23] On Thursday evenings, (weekend eve) there can be as many as 20 such announcements, that often include

long lists of survivors. Such announcements provide revenue to the stations and very useful information to many viewers. The announcements are a cross between news and advertisements. Many of them are broadcast just before the local evening news, while others are sandwiched between the English and vernacular versions of the news.

There is no doubt that the youths learn something from even the purely entertainment content of television. Such learning is usually incidental and without active involvement.[24] The kind of learning achieved from news presentations is more purposive and active. So, what kinds of pictures of the world do the youths form from their viewing of television news? If Walter Lippman is right in his assertion that the pictures in our heads arise from our sensory perceptions (including media content),[25] then it is obvious from the manifest content of Nigerian television news that the youths are presented with pictures that show world events to be mostly about government activities, economic and human interest affairs. About four-fifths of the news on Nigerian television is on Nigeria. Most (90%) of these Nigerian news are about the big cities. The First and Second Worlds are given minimal coverage (5.7% of news materials) on Nigerian television. Most of the news stories are either favourable or neutral and only about 12% could be described as bad news.[26] Thus the youths are presented

with pictures that show the world to be tranquil and less turbulent than what the newspapers present. But as with newspapers, the concern is regional (Third World) and the emphasis is local (Nigeria).[27]

CONCLUSION

Many of the 227 Nigerian youths sampled for this study said they have ready access to radio, television and newspapers. Television was chosen as the prime medium; newspapers took the second position and radio took a very close third place. The choice of medium was found to be predicated on these three main factors: availability, easy access and convenience. Television viewing was also found to be a daily routine to the youths, many of who preferred one station to another. The youths had definite uses and derived specific gratifications from particular television programmes. Entertainment was found to be an important motive to watch television. Since many respondents said they preferred television news to any other content, this means that they also find the news entertaining. This finding corroborates Schramm's news gratification principle.[28]

Many of the entertainment programmes are of foreign origin, being re-runs of British and American drama series, while a great deal of the local materials are educational or general discussion programmes. The news programmes emphasize regional

and local events and paint a picture of the world that is less turbulent than what the newspapers depict. The main subjects of the news were found to be government activities, economics and human interest stories. This is not surprising since government is the chief actor in social, political and economic affairs. The entertainment uses of the news derive from the human interest nature of many of the news stories.

The results belie the expectation that many television viewers are piqued by commercial interruptions of regular programmes and news. Only a small proportion of the sample said they detest commercials interrupting the programmes. This finding corroborates an earlier report about the attitude of British newspaper readers who were found to actually prefer a newspaper containing classified and display advertisements to an advertless one.[29]

The respondents' programme preferences show that after news which was the first choice, came politics and sports. The high interest in politics is surprising, considering that half the youths were students. A plausible explanation is that since education in Nigeria is a highly political issue (different political parties operating when this study was undertaken had different educational policies), the students in particular and the youths in general had to give attention to national politics, especially as this affected them and their educational pursuits.

The high interest in sports inderlies the perennial attraction of media products that offer direct and powerful human involvement.[30] Sports programmes provide vicarious entertainment, high quality drama and the opportunity to either identify with the good guys (the winners) or root for the under-dogs (the losers). There is no shortage of sports programming on Nigerian television. Regular menu include Friday's Soccer Made in Germany or World Class Soccer, Saturday's Big Fights of the Decade, and Wrestling and Wednesday's Midweek Sports, among others. The girls were better fans of drama programmes and movies than the boys, who stayed with news, politics and sports.

From the theoretical perspective of uses and gratifications research, these results add to the growing intelligence on the issue of what people do with the media.[31] The results suggest that even youths have definite uses for and derive specific gratifications from some media content. In spite of the common criticisms of the uses and gratifications paradigm, it remains a very useful method in attempting to answer the often ignored question of what people do with the media.[32] The results suggest that the youths use television because of the gratifications derivable from such use.

The most dominant gratification is not education or enlightenment, but rather entertainment. Even when serious

content life news is used, the driving motivation was found to be enjoyment or entertainment. Political content also attracted attention probably because of the entertainment value. This interpretation is informed by the principles of play theory which hold that a great deal of media, content is playful, even when it is intended to be serious.[33] Content analyses of American, British and Nigerian media along the lines of play theory have shown the high incidence of play items or non-issues.[34] These results, therefore, contribute to our enlarging scholarship on both uses and gratification methodology and play theory.

From a professional perspective, these results support what we already know from audience rating services about programme preferences. The practice of charging higher fees for news-adjacency or within-news advertisements is supported by our respondents' prime interest in television news. The suspicion that many people detest commercials is not upheld. The finding that direct and powerful human involvement make for higher ratings is useful in creating winning programmes. The high proportion of programmes imported from Britain and the United States underscores the immaturity of Nigerian television. An increasing number of local programmes (e.g. Basi and Company, and Second Chance) are adaptations of foreign comedy series. This is not a uniquely Nigerian phenomenon as Tunstall

identified its operation in British television where the maxim seemed to be: Import it from the United States, or, better still, copy it.[35]

These results suggest the need for definite policies in the operations of Nigerian television. At the present time, there is no identifiable television policy in Nigeria, in spite of the industry's advancing age. Television operations in Nigeria are marked by ambiguity and deliberate bias. While Nigerian media operators decry what they call media imperialism and bemoan the erosion of national cultures by foreign plays and movies, there is little being done to create authentic and genuinely native programmes.[36] Many local programmes are adaptations from American and British formats. Television bias is evident in the emphases on governments, business and big urban centres, while the affairs of the rural areas where about 80% of the population reside is neglected. These results suggest the great need for definite policies on foreign control and domestic bias in Nigerian television. If television has to meet its noble obligation as a tool for national enlightenment and inter-regional integration, especially with regard to Nigerian youths, it must be given a new direction reflective of serious commitment and purposive policy articulation.

TABLE 1

FREQUENCIES FOR BIOGRAPHIC VARIABLES

		FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
1. SEX			
	MALE	137	60.4
	FEMALE	87	38.3
	MISSING	3	1.3
	TOTAL	227	100.0
2. AGE			
	15-18 YEARS	74	32.6
	19-21 YEARS	59	26.0
	22-25 YEARS	94	41.4
	TOTAL	227	100.0
3. MARITAL STATUS			
	MARRIED	26	11.5
	SINGLE	200	88.1
	DIVORCED	1	0.4
	TOTAL	227	100.0
4. EDUCATION			
	SOME PRIMARY SCHOOL	5	2.2
	SOME HIGH SCHOOL	24	10.6
	ORDINARY LEVEL	130	57.3
	DIPLOMA/ UNDERGRADUATE	38	16.7
	OTHERS	30	13.2
	TOTAL	227	100.0

TABLE 2

FREQUENCIES FOR MEDIA ACCESSIBILITY

1. TOTAL SAMPLE

ACCESS	RADIO	(%)	TELEVI-SION	(%)	NEWS-PAPER	(%)
Regular Access	199	(87.6)	195	(85.9)	197	(86.8)
No Access	14	(6.2)	14	(6.2)	12	(5.3)
Occasional	14	(6.2)	18	(7.9)	18	(7.9)
Total	227	(100.0)	227	(100.0)	227	(100.0)

2. BOYS ONLY

ACCESS	RADIO	(%)	TELE-VISION	(%)	NEWS-PAPER	(%)
Regular Access	122	(89.1)	117	(85.4)	120	(87.6)
No Access	7	(5.1)	9	(6.6)	6	(4.4)
Occasional	8	(5.8)	11	(8.0)	11	(8.0)
Total	137	(100.0)	137	(100.0)	137	(100.0)

3. GIRLS ONLY

ACCESS	RADIO	(%)	TELE-VISION	(%)	NEWS-PAPER	(%)
Regular Access	75	(86.2)	76	(87.4)	75	(86.2)
No Access	6	(6.9)	4	(4.6)	5	(5.8)
Occasional	6	(6.9)	7	(8.0)	7	(8.0)
Total	87	(100.0)	87	(100.0)	87	(100.0)

TABLE 3

FREQUENCIES FOR MEDIA PREFERENCE

MEDIA	TOTAL SAMPLE	n(%)	BOYS ONLY	n(%)	GIRLS ONLY	n(%)
RADIO	46	(20.3)	38	(27.7)	7	(8.0)
TELEVISION	103	(45.4)	54	(39.4)	48	(55.2)
NEWSPAPERS	47	(20.7)	30	(21.9)	17	(19.5)
NO RESPONSE	31	(13.6)	15	(10.9)	15	(17.2)
TOTAL	227	(100.0)	137	(100.0)	87	(100.0)

TABLE 4

REASONS FOR MEDIA PREFERENCE

REASON	TOTAL SAMPLE	n(%)	BOYS ONLY	n(%)	GIRLS ONLY	n(%)
EASY ACCESS	100	(44.1)	64	(46.7)	34	(39.1)
LOW COST	25	(11.0)	17	(12.4)	8	(9.2)
CONVENIENCE	60	(26.4)	30	(21.9)	29	(33.3)
OTHERS	15	(6.6)	8	(5.9)	7	(7.9)
NO RESPONSE OR NO SPECIAL REASON	27	(11.9)	18	(13.1)	9	(10.3)
TOTAL	227	(100.0)	137	(100.0)	87	(100.0)

TABLE 5

FREQUENCY OF TELEVISON USE

FREQUENCY	TOTAL SAMPLE	n(%)	BOYS ONLY	n(%)	GIRLS ONLY	n(%)
DAILY	145	(63.9)	86	(62.8)	58	(66.7)
TWO-FOUR TIMES PER WEEK	19	(8.4)	12	(8.8)	7	(8.0)
ONCE A WEEK	5	(2.2)	1	(0.7)	3	(3.4)
OCCASIONALLY	53	(23.3)	34	(24.8)	18	(20.7)
NEVER	5	(2.2)	4	(2.9)	1	(1.1)
TOTAL	227	(100.0)	137	(100.0)	87	(100.0)

TABLE 6A

FREQUENCY FOR STATION PREFERENCE

CHOICE	TOTAL SAMPLE	n(%)	BOYS ONLY	n(%)	GIRLS ONLY	n(%)
DEFINITE PREFERENCE	150	(66.1)	89	(65.0)	58	(66.7)
NO PREFERENCE	71	(31.3)	43	(31.4)	28	(32.2)
NO RESPONSE	6	(2.6)	5	(3.6)	1	(1.1)
TOTAL	227	(100.0)	137	(100.0)	87	(100.0)

TABLE 6B

REASONS FOR STATION PREFERENCE

REASONS	TOTAL SAMPLE	n(%)	BOYS ONLY	n(%)	GIRLS ONLY	n(%)
ENTERTAINMENT	103	(45.4)	58	(42.3)	42	(48.3)
NATIONAL AFFAIRS	81	(35.7)	52	(38.0)	29	(33.3)
STATE AFFAIRS	21	(9.3)	14	(10.2)	7	(8.0)
ADVERTISEMENT	7	(3.1)	3	(2.2)	4	(4.6)
NATIVE DIALECT	5	(2.2)	3	(2.2)	2	(2.3)
NO PARTICULAR REASON	10	(4.4)	7	(5.1)	3	(3.4)
TOTAL	227	(100.0)	137	(100.0)	87	(100.0)

TABLE 7

FREQUENCY FOR TV PROGRAMME PREFERENCE

PROGRAMMES	TOTAL SAMPLE	n(%)	BOYS ONLY	n(%)	GIRLS ONLY	n(%)
TELEVISION NEWS	130	(57.3)	81	(59.1)	49	(56.3)
MOVIES	29	(12.8)	15	(10.9)	14	(16.1)
DRAMA	18	(7.9)	9	(6.6)	8	(9.2)
SPORTS	16	(7.0)	13	(9.5)	3	(3.5)
POLITICS	13	(5.7)	10	(7.3)	3	(3.5)
MUSIC/LIGHT ENTERTAINMENT	10	(4.4)	5	(3.6)	5	(5.7)
DISCUSSION/ DEBATES	6	(2.6)	3	(2.2)	3	(3.5)
OTHERS	5	(2.3)	1	(0.8)	2	(2.2)
TOTAL	227	(100.0)	137	(100.0)	87	(100.0)

TABLE 8

PREFERRED TIME FOR COMMERCIAL INTERRUPTIONS

PREFERENCE	TOTAL SAMPLE	n(%)	BOYS ONLY	n(%)	GIRLS ONLY	n(%)
DURING FAVOURITE PROGRAMMES	24	(10.6)	11	(8.0)	12	(13.8)
DURING INTERLUDES	91	(40.1)	62	(45.3)	28	(32.2)
DURING UNFAVOURABLE PROGRAMMES	85	(37.4)	43	(31.4)	42	(48.3)
NEVER WANT COMMERCIALS	13	(5.7)	12	(8.8)	-	
OTHER	14	(6.2)	9	(6.5)	5	(5.7)
TOTAL	227	(100.0)	137	(100.0)	87	(100.0)

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